

Ketamine treatment for depression



What the fact sheet covers:

- What is ketamine treatment
- Side effects of ketamine treatment
- Where to get ketamine treatment

What is ketamine?

Ketamine is a medication that has been used in medicine for many decades. Its original use was in anaesthesia, and it is also used in managing chronic pain.

Using ketamine to treat depression

Ketamine has been shown in recent research to have a beneficial effect on some patients suffering from depression.

The Black Dog Institute (BDI) conducted the first randomised controlled trials of ketamine in depression in Australia and is an international leader in the field under the direction of Prof Colleen Loo. For those who experience a benefit, the effect is achieved with doses lower than those used in anaesthesia. Acute antidepressant effects (i.e., lasting days) after a single treatment of ketamine have been demonstrated in clinical trials, but many people will require ongoing

treatment to maintain benefits. Ketamine treatment has been shown to be safe where there is adequate safety monitoring. The team at the Black Dog Institute are international pioneers and leaders in the safety monitoring of ketamine treatment for depression.

Ketamine can be offered when people have not responded to antidepressant medication or other treatments. At present, BDI does not use this treatment for other conditions. A thorough psychiatric evaluation must be undertaken for each person to determine if ketamine is a suitable treatment.

What are the side effects?

In our treatment program, a low dose of ketamine is used, so it is unlikely that side effects will be severe or long-lasting. Responses to ketamine treatment vary from person to person, and some people may experience unwanted side effects.





The most common include disorientation, a dream-like state or changes in perception, changes in blood pressure and heart rate, and drowsiness. These changes may occur immediately after treatment and typically resolve within 1-2 hours.

What happens during a session?

We will advise you of the treatment plan based on our clinical assessment. During the treatment course, your mood will be assessed regularly. You will also be required to undergo regular safety monitoring and blood and urine tests.

At the Black Dog Institute, ketamine is administered via an injection under the skin, i.e., similar to the procedure for a vaccination, or inhaled through the nose (intranasal). A session involves lying in a comfortable recliner chair. A staff member will be with you to guide you through the treatment process. After ketamine administration, you will remain at the clinic for an observation period and undergo regular safety monitoring. We will check that you are fit to leave the clinic before we discharge you.

How long does ketamine take to work?

Like any treatment for depression, ketamine is not suitable for everyone. If you do respond to ketamine, it may occur within as little as a few hours to as long as a few weeks to have a good response to treatment.

Will it work for me?

It is important to first discuss with your regular treating psychiatrist regarding your history, the risks and benefits of treatment, practicalities (cost, time, travel) and whether it is recommended that ketamine is a suitable treatment for you currently.

A thorough psychiatric assessment and a physical examination must be done before treatment. After the evaluation, our staff can discuss the factors that may affect your likelihood of benefit.

What is the cost involved?

You must complete an initial screening assessment with a psychiatrist to determine if ketamine treatment is suitable. The initial screening costs \$420 and may be bulk billed if you have a concession card.

There is currently no Medicare subsidy for ketamine treatment. Treatment is provided on a fee-for-service basis. Additional preparatory, progress review and follow-up appointments may be bulk billed.



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Why come to the Black Dog Institute for ketamine treatment?

The Black Dog Institute has one of the most experienced teams that offer ketamine treatment, founded by internationally respected psychiatrist and researcher Professor Colleen Loo and led by Dr Adam Bayes.

Professor Loo has expertise derived from over 20 years of experience in treating mental illnesses using novel treatments such as ketamine. Dr Bayes is an academic psychiatrist and expert in using ketamine to treat depression. The Black Dog Institute is also a leading research centre in ketamine treatment, working with the University of New South Wales.

Do I need a referral?

Yes, we require a referral completed by a psychiatrist with whom you have an ongoing therapeutic relationship, as ketamine is a complex treatment that requires very close monitoring during and after the treatment period. The referral must include the completion of a Ketamine Referral Form, which can be obtained via the contact details below, plus a letter detailing your current situation and history, as well as any previous correspondences/ records relevant to the referral.

Our clinic team will then review this information. If the referral is appropriate, an assessment with a member of the team will be offered. This assessment will determine whether ketamine treatment is recommended or whether other

treatments are more suitable. We will liaise with your psychiatrist as to the outcome of the evaluation.

Where can I find out more information?

Phone: (02) 9382 2991

Email: clinic@blackdog.org.au

Web: [Sydney TMS, Neurostimulation and Ketamine Program](#)



For more information

Visit our website blackdoginstitute.org.au

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